

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 99

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 122

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 99—Relative to honoring the Sisters of Mercy.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 31, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

SCR 99, Ortiz. Honoring the Sisters of Mercy.

This measure would approve the construction of a memorial honoring the Sisters of Mercy in the Capitol Historic Region, as specified, subject to review by the Department of General Services and the State Review Committee, formed pursuant to the measure. This measure would require the construction of this memorial to be funded privately, and would allow the Sisters of Mercy to design and construct the memorial upon approval, subject to specified conditions.

WHEREAS, Founded in Ireland by Catherine McAuley in 1831 to serve those who were poor, sick, uneducated, and in misery, the Sisters of Mercy, led by Mary Baptist Russell and seven other Sisters of Mercy, left Kinsale, Ireland, and traveled to California in 1854; and

WHEREAS, The Sisters of Mercy arrived in San Francisco on December 8, 1854, to respond to the city’s greatest needs: the untended sick, the destitute, abused women, orphaned children, and the uneducated. Known as “walking nuns,” they visited shanties and county hospitals and were the first females to visit a state penitentiary, San Quentin Prison, and anywhere misery was found; and

WHEREAS, During the Gold Rush Days, on October 2, 1857, and just seven years after California became an official state, Mary Baptist Russell and four Sisters of Mercy came to California’s capital, beginning a legacy of service spanning 150 years; and

WHEREAS, Three days after arriving in Sacramento, a school on 7th and K Streets was opened with 65 students, which swelled to 120 a few months later; and

WHEREAS, The Sisters of Mercy purchased land in the heart of the city to build a school. Passage of the “Capitol Bill” in 1860 resulted in the sale of that property to the state for its original price of \$4,850. This is now the site of the State Capitol Building; and

WHEREAS, The Sisters of Mercy moved to 9th and G Streets where they opened the St. Joseph’s Academy, the center of their works for more than 80 years; and

WHEREAS, In December 1861, an epic flood kept parts of Sacramento under water for six months. Moving in and out of their second story

windows, the Sisters of Mercy went by boat to minister to flood victims at the city pavilion, becoming Sacramento's first visiting nurses; and

WHEREAS, Before 1896, Sacramento had no private pay hospital. Those who were not indigent or employed by Southern Pacific had to travel to San Francisco for care. The Sisters of Mercy responded to the challenge, and in 1895 bought Ridge Home, a small sanitarium at 22nd and R Streets. This was soon replaced by Mater Misericordiae Hospital in 1897; and

WHEREAS, The Sisters of Mercy resumed caring for orphans in 1900 when Mrs. Leland Stanford donated the Stanford Mansion to the Sacramento diocese for that purpose. With only 15 professed "Sisters," the community ran a thriving academy, an orphanage, and a hospital; and

WHEREAS, The Sisters of Mercy, experiencing crises such as malaria, typhoid, and consumption, were challenged by the flu pandemic of 1918. Hospitals were jammed. At its peak, 400 new cases a day were diagnosed. Of the 55 nurses in training, only 19 were healthy. With all space needed for sick adults, the Sisters of Mercy volunteered to set up a special nursery for tiny flu victims at the Stanford Home; and

WHEREAS, At the end of World War I, land was purchased at 40th and J Streets, for the site of today's Mercy General Hospital, which opened on February 11, 1925, a symbol of the Sisters of Mercy's commitment to the well-being of the city; and

WHEREAS, The Sisters of Mercy have since spread their service to towns large and small throughout California. Recognizing they could do more through collaboration, in 1986 the Mercy Sisters of Auburn and Burlingame together established Catholic Healthcare West, a nonprofit health care system with over 40 member hospitals; and

WHEREAS, In 1991, the Sisters of Mercy in Sacramento opened a new chapter in their story joining with Sisters of Mercy throughout the United States and 11 countries to form the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, with more than 22,000 Sisters and associates to better serve today's needs; and

WHEREAS, Today, there are five free health clinics in the greater Sacramento region, several educational programs, and multiple affordable housing communities through Mercy Housing California. Mercy, in the greater Sacramento region has six hospitals, employing more than 7,000 employees and caring for thousands of patients each year; and

WHEREAS, The Sisters of Mercy provided the State of California's first health, education, and welfare programs for the poor and have been commemorated with a small, inconspicuous plaque located near the north entrance to the State Capitol Building, which will be relocated in the near future due to construction in that area; and

WHEREAS, A memorial in the Capitol Historic Region will provide a more appropriate "living tribute" to the Sisters of Mercy's continuing partnership with the City of Sacramento and State of California, educating visitors to the park of this strong history and alliance; and

WHEREAS, Funds for the construction of the memorial will be provided through private contributions; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby approves the construction of a tribute to the Sisters of Mercy in the Capitol Historic Region, with a preference for siting upon or adjacent to the site of the prior commemorative plaque displaced by the construction of the North Pavilion; and be it further

Resolved, That a State Review Committee be formed, consisting of representatives from the Department of General Services, the State Historic Preservation Office, the Assembly, and the Senate. This review committee shall work with the Sisters of Mercy to identify an appropriate location for the memorial in the Capitol Historic Region, and, if the preferred site is not acceptable to the Sisters of Mercy, shall review a memorial design. The actual construction of the statue shall not proceed without the Sisters of Mercy meeting all requirements of construction on state property, and, in the event the preferred site is not acceptable to the Sisters of Mercy, construction shall be contingent upon the adoption of the Capitol Park Master Plan; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of General Services work with and consult with the Sisters of Mercy to accomplish the following goals: review of the preliminary design plans to identify potential maintenance concerns, Americans with Disabilities Act compliance, and other safety concerns; review and approval of proper California Environmental Quality Act documents prepared for the Sisters of Mercy for work at the designated historic property; review of final construction documents to ensure that all requirements are met; preparation of the right of entry permit outlining the final area of work, final construction documents, construction plans, the contractor hired to perform the work, insurance, bonding, provisions for damage to state property, and inspection requirements; preparation of a maintenance agreement outlining the Sisters of Mercy's responsibility for long-term maintenance of the memorial due to aging, vandalism, or relocation; and inspection of construction performed by the contractor hired by the Sisters of Mercy; and be it further

Resolved, That the Sisters of Mercy may establish a schedule for the design, construction, and dedication of the memorial, implement procedures to solicit designs for the memorial and devise a selection process for the choice of the design, select individuals or organizations to provide fundraising services and to construct the memorial, review and monitor the design and construction of the memorial and establish a program for the dedication of the memorial, and report to the Legislature biannually through the Joint Committee on Rules on the progress of the memorial notwithstanding; and be it further

Resolved, That no state moneys will be expended for construction of the memorial. Funds for the construction of the memorial shall be provided exclusively through private contributions for this purpose; and be it further

Resolved, That if the memorial is constructed, the Sisters of Mercy shall sign a maintenance agreement with the state and maintain the memorial with private contributions; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature hereby requests the Department of General Services and the State Review Committee formed pursuant to this measure to approve the construction of a tribute to the Sisters of Mercy in the Capitol Historic Region; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.